

Message Text

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R 121340Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 5532

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

DEPT PLEASE PASS CAIRO

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, XF, TS, US

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT - MESSAGE FOR PRESIDENT
BOURGUIBA

REF: STATE 214855

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA READ YOUR MESSAGE WITH INTEREST AND EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE WITH LATEST ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT. HE BELIEVED IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP UP MOMENTUM AND STRONGLY HOPED THAT YOU WOULD SUCCEED IN FURTHER NEGOTIATING EFFORTS. HE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED PESSIMISM, HOWEVER, THAT FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE SETTLEMENT WOULD BE MADE AND HE BELIEVED THAT EGYPT WOULD NOW TURN INWARD. END SUMMARY.

2. IN LATE AFTERNOON SEPT 11 I MET WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AT PALACE, IN COMPANY OF FONMIN CHATTI, TO DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE. BOURGUIBA FIRST APOLOGIZED FOR NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO SEE ME EARLIER IN DAY, SAYING HE HAD BEEN OCCUPIED ALL MORNING WITH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING WHICH HE HAD CHAIRED. HE TOLD ME THAT HE MAKES A PRACTICE OF CHAIRING THESE MEETINGS TWO OR THREE TIMES A YEAR.

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3. AS IS HIS CUSTOM, PRESIDENT READ YOUR MESSAGE OUT LOUD, WITH CONSIDERABLE CARE AND ATTENTION. AT CERTAIN TIMES HE WOULD REPEAT A SENTENCE AND OCCASIONALLY HE NODDED HIS HEAD IN APPROVAL. WHEN HE WAS FINISHED READING, HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE MESSAGE AND SAID THAT HE WELCOMED THIS LATEST EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT. HE COMMENTED THAT THIS WILL IMPROVE SITUATION IN AREA, INCLUDING LESSENING THE POSSIBILITY OF THE OUTBREAK OF WAR. HE NOTED SPECIFICALLY THAT THE WITHDRAWAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES WHICH WILL BE INSTALLED FOR MONITORING PURPOSES ARE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN PREVENTING FUTURE CONFLICT.

4. BOURGUIBA EXPRESSED THE STRONG HOPE THAT YOU WOULD SUCCEED IN FURTHER EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT DISENGAGEMENT ON THE GOLAN AND ON THE WEST BANK. HE SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF THE REFERENCE IN YOUR LETTER TO CONTINUING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SYRIA. HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE THAT WE NOT REPEAT NOT ALLOW A VOID TO BE CREATED AND THAT WE MOVE AHEAD QUICKLY ON OTHER FRONTS. HE SAID HE HAD EMPHASIZED THIS IN HIS MEETING WITH EGYPTIAN EMISSARY MOHAMED RIAD YESTERDAY.

5. BOURGUIBA ALLUDED TO STATEMENT, WHICH RIAD ALLEGEDLY MADE TO HIM PREVIOUS DAY, THAT AFTER HAVING LOST FOUR WARS, EGYPT HAD NO ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN TOMAKE BEST DEAL IT COULD WITH ISRAEL. BOURGUIBA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT EGYPT HAD TO GET ITS ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN, AND ESSENTIAL TO THIS OBJECTIVE WERE ASSURED FREE PASSAGE THROUGH SUEZ CANAL, RETURN OF ABU RODEIS OIL FIELD AND RECOVERY OF TWO SINAI PASSES. IN ANY CASE, SADAT REALIZED THAT ISRAEL, BACKED TO THE HILT BY THE US, IS JUST TOO STRONG AN ADVERSARY. BOURGUIBA SAID THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD SADAT'S POSITION AND HAD URGED OTHER ARAB LEADERS TO BE EQUALLY UNDERSTANDING. AFTER ALL, HE CONTINUED, IT WAS NASSER WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE BY HIS RECKLESS ACTIONS FOR THE LOSS OF SINAI AND THE CLOSING OF THE SUEZ CANAL -- AND IN THE PROCESS WHAT HAD NASSER ACHIEVED FOR THE
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PALESTINIANS? ASKED BOURGUIBA RHETORICALLY. BOURGUIBA OBSERVED THAT SADAT HAD GOTTEN WHAT HE NEEDED. THE SINAI TERRITORY WHICH ISRAEL CONTINUES TO RETAIN IS NOTHING BUT DESERT.

6. BOURGUIBA THEN CONFIDED THAT WHILE HE HOPED HE WAS WRONG, HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC CONCERNING FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE SETTLEMENT. IN THE FIRST

PLACE, HE THOUGH THAT EGYPT WOULD LOSE INTEREST IN

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NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

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PALESTINE PROBLEM AS IT TURNED INCREASINGLY INWARD. ISRAEL COULD BE EXPECTED TO HOLD FIRM WITH REGARD TO BOTH GOLAN HEIGHTS AND WEST BANK. SYRIA IS UNHAPPY WITH THE INTERIM ACCORD AND IS ANGRY AT EGYPT. ALSO DISPLEASED ARE IRAQ, ALGERIA, AND LIBYA. PALESTINIAN ISSUE REMAINS UNRESOLVED AND PALESTINIANS NOW FEAR THAT THEY WILL BE FORGOTTEN. PALESTINIANS ARE EXTREMELY ABLE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFERED INJUSTICE. WHAT HE SAID HE FOUND DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND IS WHY USG DOES NOT RECOGNIZE PLO AND WHY AMERICAN PEOPLE, WITH TRADITION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMANITARIANISM, SHOW SO LITTLE CONCERN FOR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

7. I REPLIED TO PRESIDENT BY STATING THAT I WAS MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN HE. USG RECOGNIZED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THERE BE NO DIPLOMATIC VOID--THAT MOMENTUM BE MAINTAINED. I MENTIONED THAT YOU HAD SEEN PRESIDENT ASSAD TWICE DURING YOUR RECENT STAY IN THE AREA. I DESCRIBED THE DILEMMA WHICH HAD FACED USG FOLLOWING YOUR MARCH EFFORT TO OBTAIN INTERIM ACCORD. WE HAD CONSIDERED THREE OPTIONS: EITHER DISCONTINUE OUR ROLE, GO FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, OR RESUME STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH. FIRST OPTION WOULD HAVE SERVED NO ONE'S

INTEREST, AND SECOND OPTION WAS TOO FORMIDABLE.

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WE CHOSE THIRD ALTERNATIVE BOTH BECAUSE OF INTEREST SHOWN BY BOTH PARTIES THAT WE DO SO AND BECAUSE OF OUR CONTINUED BELIEF THAT STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH WAS STILL THE BEST BET.

8. I CALLED ATTENTION TO SIMILARITY BETWEEN OUR APPROACH AND KEY ELEMENT IN BOURGUIBA'S WELL-KNOWN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF TACKLING PROBLEMS "PAR ETAPES." ONLY IN THIS FASHION, I CONTINUED, COULD ONE CREATE THE KIND OF AMBIANCE REQUIRED TO EASE THE MUTUAL SUSPICIONS AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO GRAPPLE WITH FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM. IN OUR VIEW, LATEST EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT IS FACILITATIVE IN THIS RESPECT.

9. RE PALESTINIANS, I REPEATED WHAT I HAD TOLD PRESIDENT FREQUENTLY BEFORE TO EFFECT THAT USG FULLY AWARE THAT THERE COULD BE NO FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF PALESTINIANS. IT IS OUR CONSIDERED OPINION, HOWEVER, THAT BEFORE COPING WITH PALESTINIAN QUESTION, WE MUST FIRST DEAL WITH DISENGAGEMENT. I SAID WE HAD NOT RECOGNIZED PLO BECAUSE (A) IT REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL; (B) IT HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORISM; AND (C) IT IS NOT CLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT IT REALLY REFLECTS PALESTINIAN CONSENSUS. WHILE IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT ARAFAT HAS ESCHEWED POLICY OF TERRORISM, THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN PLO WHO HAVE BEEN SO IMPLICATED. IN ANY CASE, PLO HAS NOT RENOUNCED TERRORISM AS INSTRUMENT OF POLICY AND MANY AMERICANS THINK OF PLO IN TERRORIST TERMS.

10. BOURGUIBA SAID THAT TERRORISM IS NOT UNIQUE TO PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. MANY NATIONAL MOVEMENTS HAVE EMPLOYED SIMILAR TACTICS WHEN THEY HAVE FAILED TO ACHIEVE THEIR PURPOSES THROUGH POLITICAL MEANS. ISRAEL IS A CASE IN POINT, CONTINUED BOURGUIBA, AND HE MENTIONED IN PARTICULAR MENAHIM BEGIN. IN ANY CASE, PLO WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL AS LONG AS ISRAEL IGNORES PALESTINIANS. I NOTED THE "CHICKEN AND EGG" SITUATION WHICH SEEMS TO PREVAIL

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AND OBSERVED THAT EVENTUALLY SOME WAY MUST BE FOUND
TO ENABLE THE TWO PEOPLES TO RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER.

11. IN CONCLUSION, I SAID I WOULD PASS ALONG HIS
VIEWS TO YOU AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT HE WOULD
USE HIS INFLUENCE TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORT. HE REPEATED
THAT HE WELCOMED YOUR EFFORTS AND THAT HE WAS TAKING
POSITIVE APPROACH IN HIS CONTACTS WITH ARAB GOVERNMENTS.

12. WHILE I AVOIDED MAKING ANY COMMENTS TO PRESS
CONCERNING CALL ON PRESIDENT, LOCAL PRESS CARRIED
REPORT THAT I TRANSMITTED MESSAGE FROM YOU "ON IMPORTANT
DEVELOPMENTS IN NEAR EAST." I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT
CHATTI WAS THE SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION.
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